

Christmas 2A (1/2/11 – *In the Father’s House ... Among the Father’s Things*)

In the Name of JESUS. [Amen]

It is easy to miss the fact that the Incarnate Christ is actually *Immanuel* – **GOD** with us. We are creatures whose primary grasp of reality is visual ... and tactile – what we can see and feel and smell and taste. We are creatures of the senses mostly. And what we **cannot** see – well, the old saying holds quite true: *Out of sight, out of mind*. We are all like doubting/unbelieving Thomas. Unless we see with our eyes ... thrust in our fingers and hands, we do not believe. That can work with the risen Christ – but not with the divinity of Christ hidden in a young growing Boy.

Mary and Joseph were “sensory” people. They could see the **flesh** of the Word made flesh – but not the eternal, divine **WORD** that had taken on that flesh. To put it another way – Jesus seemed to be just a normal little Boy to them ... like any other. They seem to forget that He is also the Son of God. And how many 12-year-old boys would you find sitting around the Temple with a bunch of gray-haired, long-bearded, stuffy old priests and scribes and rabbis? There is a lot to see and do in the big city of Jerusalem – especially for a young boy from the small town of Nazareth. And because Mary and Joseph saw Jesus as simply a Boy, the Temple is the last place they looked on their three-day search when He failed to show up among the others of their caravan.

Despite the fact that Mary *treasured up* so much *in her heart* [LK 2.51] – the words of the shepherds ... this event – it was simply hard for her to realize that this very human Son of hers was also the Son of God ... *very God of very God ... begotten of the Father*. And that is precisely why she and Joseph failed to immediately search for Jesus *In the Father’s House ... Among the Father’s Things*.

We have the same problem, of course – for we, too, are “sensory” people. It is easy for us to see and believe the things of the flesh – and maybe hold them in high regard. But when God hides His divinity in/with/under such fleshly, mundane things – well, then we tend to miss that ... forget about that ... and fail to hold them as truly holy, divine Gifts.

The Scriptures ... Holy Baptism ... Confession and Absolution ... the Holy Supper of our Lord ... the Divine Service ... the preaching and teaching – these **also** are, in a sense, *Immanuel* ... **God** with us. God comes to us, abides with us in/with/under the Word and the Sacraments. But how well do we recognize that? How well do we live that? Our lives become distressed – like Mary’s and Joseph’s. We may know that something is missing in our lives – someOne. And we go searching frantically here and there ... everywhere – anywhere ... but where our true Treasure is to be found. It is the sad truth that it is often only when our lives have fallen completely apart, that we finally look for peace and joy and comfort in the place where we should have looked all along – before anywhere and anything else.

We find many people in life searching for answers ... for purpose ... for meaning ... for truth ... for satisfaction ... for spirituality ... for peace and joy and comfort. But they are looking in all the wrong places. They fail to look for Jesus where He can be found – in His Word and in His Sacraments ... *In the Father’s House ... Among the Father’s Things*.

Sometimes we are understanding – and want to help. Other times we are haughty and look down our noses at them – as if **we** had discovered the truth on our own ... found Jesus right away *In the Father’s House ... Among the Father’s Things*. And in those times when we **are** understanding – when we are humble ... and recognize that we ourselves too often have searched for Jesus in the wrong places – even in those times we often falter and fail to do the most simple outreach. We become tongue-tied. We would like a detailed, step-by-step evangelism program at our fingertips and on our lips. It is quite easy really – we make outreach so unnecessarily difficult. *Do you want to know where to find Jesus? He is In the Father’s House ... Among the Father’s Things. Come and see!* It really is that simple. It is our own failure to fully recognize that reality, and live that reality, that makes both our outreach to others – and our inreach to fellow members and even our own weak-handed, feeble-kneed, faltering souls – difficult.

Curious that the only record of our Savior’s Youth begins and ends in the Temple – or many not so curious. It is a divine commentary on both the

faith of Mary and Joseph and on the fidelity of the only-begotten Incarnate Son. We heard in the Christmas accounts how Mary was highly favored of the Lord and how Joseph was *a just man* – righteous before God [MT 1.19]. It should not surprise us then – at least not too much – that they were faithful and obedient to God’s holy, revealed will. Despite their lapse of righteous judgment regarding where to find the “missing” Jesus, they were by God’s grace righteous believers, who desired to do what was God-pleasing. All parents should be so faithful in making sure their children – both infant and youth – are *In the Father’s House ... Among the Father’s Things*. Thanks be to God for such diligent parents.

But the real point is that **JESUS** is found *In the Father’s House ... Among the Father’s Things*. Jesus is at the Temple ... the place of God’s gracious, merciful, trespass-forgiving Presence among His people. He is found there first as an Infant as even then He fulfills the Law in our stead [LK 2.21-40]. He is found there next as a Youth of twelve years during the *Feast of Passover* – as we hear today. Finally, at the end of His earthly life, Jesus is found in the Temple once more during *Holy Week* at another *Passover Feast* ... shortly before He accomplishes the purpose for which *the Word became flesh and dwelt among us* [JN 1.14]. Namely, when He is our Passover Lamb and offers Himself on the Cross to shed His holy, precious Blood for our redemption – after He is cast outside by the wicked priestly tenants of His Father’s vineyard in *the fullness of time* ... according to the Divine Plan [EPH 1.10]. *In the Father’s House ... Among the Father’s Things*: that is where Jesus is found – both then ... and now.

Here our Lord Himself – though just a Boy of twelve – teaches us what it is to be a child of God. He is listening and learning from the called servants of the Word. God’s children gather with God’s people around His Word and Sacraments. That is where we hear that our sins are forgiven for Jesus’ sake. That is where we sing with the Christmas angels: *Glory be to God on high, and on earth, peace, goodwill toward men*. That is where we sing with righteous Simeon: *Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace according to Thy Word, for mine eyes have seen Thy Salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples*. Here in this place – in this Temple of God – we find the Lord Jesus ... where He is **always** to be found.

But let us look carefully at our text – at these first recorded words of our Word made flesh ... His first recorded sermon, if you will. Our incarnate Lord has spoken many words before this, of course. The Holy Spirit did not have those written – not even the questions and answers He was speaking there in the Temple. ***But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His Name*** [JN 20.31].

***Why were you looking for Me? Did you not know that I must be in My Father's House?*** By these words the Boy Jesus indicates that He knows quite clearly that His true Father is God the Father. Joseph is a good and pious guardian – but Christ became flesh by means of the Holy Spirit conceiving in the Virgin Mary's womb. God is His true Father – and Jesus' true place ... true home ... is with God the Father. That is where He is from. That is where He will return. That is where He must be.

The original Greek actually says: ***Did you not know that it is NECESSARY for Me to be among the things (the matters) of My Father?*** Jesus is *Immanuel* – God with us. Jesus is God the Son **with us** for a purpose – as St. Paul points out: ***to unite all things in Him, things in heaven and things on earth.*** In His own Person – even at the age of twelve ... even before, as an Infant in the manger – Christ has united heaven and earth ... the divine and the human. Jesus is God in the Flesh – come in the fullness of time to fulfill the divine counsel of God's will – namely, to purchase for us an eternal, heavenly inheritance ... to bring about in His divinely human Flesh ***the Gospel of our Salvation*** ... and to declare to us this most blessed ***Word of truth*** both in word and deed [EPH 1.13]. It is **necessary** that He be about the matters of His Father – for **our** sake ... for us and for our eternal salvation.

And know this, dear Christians. You will always find Jesus ***In the Father's House ... Among the Father's Things*** – here in this place ... declaring and giving to you freely and abundantly His amazing ***Word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation ... redemption through His blood ... the forgiveness of your trespasses*** and sins ... ***according to the riches of His grace*** ... until you possess the fullness of your inheritance in heaven.

In the Name of the FATHER and of the ✠ SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT. [Amen]